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FM USINT HAVANA
TO RUCOWCV/CCGDSEVEN MIAMI FL PRIORITY
RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 4298
INFO RUEHBJ/AMEMBASSY BEIJING PRIORITY 0105
RUEHQT/AMEMBASSY QUITO PRIORITY 0013
RUEHKO/AMEMBASSY TOKYO PRIORITY 0036
RHMFISS/CDR USSOUTHCOM MIAMI FL PRIORITY
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY
RHMFISS/COGARD INTELCOORDCEN WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY
RUCOWCA/COMLANTAREA COGARD PORTSMOUTH VA PRIORITY 0134
RUEABND/DEA HQS WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY
RHEFHLC/DEPT OF HOMELAND SECURITY WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY
RUEAWJA/DEPT OF JUSTICE WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY
RHMFISS/FBI WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY
RUEAHLA/HOMELAND SECURITY CENTER WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY
RHMFISS/HQ BICE INTEL WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY
RUCOWCV/MARINCEN MIAMI FL PRIORITY
RHMFISS/NAVINTELOFC GUANTANAMO BAY CU PRIORITY
RUEILB/NCTC WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY
RUWDHDP/OBLA LOS ANGELES CA PRIORITY
RUEAORC/US CUSTOMS AND BORDER PROTECTION WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY
RUEHGT/USDAO GUATEMALA CITY GT PRIORITY
RUEHZP/USDAO PANAMA CITY PM PRIORITY

S E C R E T HAVANA 000210

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 04/09/2029
TAGS: [ASEC](#) [CU](#) [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [SMIG](#) [SNAR](#)
SUBJECT: CAUGHT IN THE ACT: AMCIT IN CUBA CAUGHT SMUGGLING
CHINESE NATIONALS

Classified By: COM JONATHAN FARRAR FOR REASONS 1.4 (B) & (D)

11. (C) Summary: On 30 March 2009 the American Citizens Services (ACS) unit at the United States Interests Section (USINT) in Havana, Cuba, received notice from the Cuban Ministry of Foreign Relations that on 27 March, the Government of Cuba (GOC) took into custody an American Citizen (AMCIT) suspected of staging 9 Chinese nationals in Cuba to be smuggled to Mexico. The AMCIT was taken into custody by Cuban authorities after he was apprehended with 9 Chinese males in a rented vehicle in Artemisa, Cuba. The United States Coast Guard Drug Interdiction Specialist (DIS) assigned to USINT Havana worked with ACS to garner migrant smuggling-related information on the subject. End Summary.

12. (C) As of 2 April 2009, the AMCIT and 9 Chinese were being held at the Centro Nacional de Internamiento de la Direccion de Inmigracion y Extranjeria, a Cuban Ministry of Interior immigration facility in the city of Havana. ACS officers from USINT visited the AMCIT to verify his health and well-being per normal operating procedures. According to the AMCIT's statements to USINT ACS officers, AMCIT was in the process of driving 9 Chinese nationals to a pre-determined location on the south coast of Cuba in La Habana Province. He had planned to deliver the Chinese nationals to a place along the coast where they would meet a go-fast vessel. The go-fast would in-turn take the 9 Chinese nationals to Mexico at night. AMCIT had a small amount of cash in the vehicle, and according to statements taken by the GOC during his arrest, the Chinese had already paid for their trip to Mexico (apparently they made direct payments to the AMCIT). The Chinese nationals waited in Havana for an undisclosed period of time before the AMCIT arrived to pick them up for the trip to the coast.

13. (S/NF) Per Cuban authorities at the immigration facility, the Chinese nationals traveled from China to Moscow, then to

Havana with an ultimate destination of the United States via Mexico. It is unknown at this time who granted visas to these Chinese for entry into Cuba, although recent classified Department of Defense reporting points to ongoing migrant smuggling operations through Cuba by a Hong Kong and Malaysia-based smuggler and a Cuba-based smuggler. According to the same report, smugglers may be procuring visas through a contact at the Belizean embassy in Havana, Cuba.

¶4. (C) The AMCIT paid for the Chinese nationals to stay in separate hotels (or "casas particulares" similar to B&B's in the United States) in Havana, and reportedly rented the car he was driving to transport the Chinese nationals to the Cuban south coast. USINT ACS reports the AMCIT was utilizing a cell phone to coordinate his movements in country and with go-fast operators, which assisted Cuban authorities in their apprehension of the AMCIT. When the AMCIT was apprehended, he was unable to explain why he was traveling with the 9 Chinese nationals.

¶5. (C) The AMCIT is currently married to a Chinese female, although she has recently filed for a divorce; his current girlfriend resides in Ecuador. The AMCIT's passport shows multiple entries into China, as well as Ecuador, Macau, and a host of other nations. AMCIT has an extensive prior criminal background, and made 22 border crossings in 2008, including into the United States (Houston George Bush Intercontinental Airport, Chicago O'Hare International Airport, and Hidalgo, Texas), Panama (Tocumen International Airport), Mexico (Gen Mariano Escobedo International Airport), Ecuador (Quito

Mariscal Sucre International Airport), Hong Kong, and Japan (Narita International Airport). The AMCIT spent a significant period of time in Guatemala and appears to have departed there in December 2008. A subsequent itinerary recently brought him to Havana via Panama and Guatemala on TACA airlines.

¶6. (C) ACS reports that the AMCIT does not appear to be a hardened criminal (ACS was not privy to the AMCIT's criminal history when this comment was made). AMCIT suffers from diabetes, and has circulation problems. As of 1 April, the GOC informed ACS that the AMCIT will be put on trial.

¶7. (C) Comment: This is the second arrest of an AMCIT involved in the smuggling of Chinese nationals through Cuba in the past three weeks; the AMCIT involved in that case is currently in a Cuban prison for an undisclosed period of time. Artemisa, Cuba is located in La Habana Province between the north and south coasts of Cuba. Per the AMCIT's statements regarding his plan to take the 9 Chinese nationals to the south coast of Cuba, this may be an indication that other nationalities besides Cubans are being smuggled from Cuba to Mexico as part of ongoing, illicit smuggling operations here. End comment.
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